Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada

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STATEMENT ON BILINGUALISM

Introduction

An important role of universities is to ensure that the leaders of Canada's next generation can respond to the realities of Canadian society, one of which is that we are a country with two official languages. English-French relations and improved communications between anglophones and francophones are important aspects of nationhood which universities should help to foster.

One of the most evident results of the promotion of bilingualism in recent years has been the large increase in student bilingual-exchange programs throughout Canada coupled with dramatic growth of French immersion programs in anglophone schools. While enrolments in these programs still account for only a small percentage of total enrolments, the increase in numbers is significant. These immersion programs are relatively recent; most are in the elementary schools and those in secondary schools are beginning to produce graduates who are entering our university system. Some of these students who have gained proficiency in the other official language in the elementary and secondary school systems are anxious to continue to maintain and to develop their language competencies at the postsecondary level. Many others who have not had the benefit of immersion programs at the elementary and secondary levels could gain from access to courses and programs in the other official language at the university level.

Principles

AUCC believes:

1. that bilingual competence is most effectively developed in the elementary and secondary schools and that universities should encourage prospective students to have acquired competence in the other official language;

2. that universities have an important role to play in promoting and further developing bilingual competence in Canadian society;

3. that universities should work toward improving bilingualism in Canada by providing opportunities within their own institutions for the development of bilingual skills;

4. that universities should encourage students to become competent in the other official language prior to graduation;

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5. that universities should develop their ability to foster bilingualism by:

   a) developing courses, course sections and programs in the other official language;

   b) making effective use of the language skills of bilingually competent faculty and working towards increasing the number of such faculty;

   c) seeking to provide students with bilingual student services and with a choice of instruction, written assignments, examinations and theses in either official language;

6. that universities should encourage bilingualism by providing opportunities for student and staff exchanges with universities operating in the other official language;

7. that universities should promote among students, faculty and the communities in which they are located, knowledge of and interest in the cultural heritages of the two official language groups in Canada.

8. that governments should provide to Canadian universities sufficient financial resources to facilitate the promotion of bilinguism as outlined above.

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